

## Nomenclatural Notes

### The authorship and date of the specific name of *Ursus* or *Thalarctos maritimus*, the polar bear, is Phipps (1774) and not Linnaeus (1758)

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In 1934 C.W. Stiles (the first Secretary to the Commission) sought to place several generic names for carnivores on the Official List. The name *Thalarctos* Gray, 1825 (p. 62, published as a subgenus of *Ursus* Linnaeus, 1758, type species by monotypy *T. polaris* Gray, 1825) was one of those considered. A number of mammalogists, including Dr Angel Cabrera (a Commissioner from Argentina), were invited to comment. Dr Cabrera stated that the specific name of *Ursus maritimus*, already known as a senior synonym of *T. polaris* and usually cited from Phipps (1774) or Erxleben (1777), dated from Linnaeus (1758). This authorship and date (Linnaeus, 1758) for *maritimus* was incorporated into the eventual ruling on the case (Opinion 384, April 1956; see Opinions and Declarations 12: 71–190) and recorded in subsequent compilations of Commission rulings: *The Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* (1958), *Official Lists and Indexes of Names and Works in Zoology* (1987), and *Official Lists and Indexes of Names and Works in Zoology, Supplement 1986–2000* (2001).

Linnaeus (1758, p. 47), however, recorded '*Ursus maritimus albus major, arcticus*' under *Ursus arctos* (the brown bear), and he did not adopt 'maritimus' as a valid, or even binominal, name. In these circumstances 'maritimus' is not available (Articles 5.1 and 11.5 of the Code). Linnaeus referred to Martens's (1675, p. 73, pl. O, fig. C) description and illustration in *Spitzbergische oder Groenlandische Reise Beschreibung* and noted 'forte distincta species est, nobis non visa' [perhaps a different species, I have not seen it], indicating that he doubted that it was a true species distinct from the brown bear.

The entry for '*Ursus maritimus albus major*' in Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*, Ed. 12 (1766) is a repeat of that in Ed. 10 (1758) with the added words 'capite longiore, collo angustiore'.

It seems that the first author to make available a name for the polar bear was Phipps (1774, p. 185). His description of *Ursus maritimus* was very brief ('This animal is much larger than the black bear'), but measurements were given and there was an unambiguous reference to Pennant's (1771) *Synopsis of quadrupeds*, which included a detailed description and illustration (p. 192, pl. 20, fig. 1) of the 'Polar Bear' (but no latin name). The reference to Pennant's text and plate renders Phipps's name available by indication (Articles 12.2.5 and 12.2.7) even if Phipps's own description is considered to be insufficient for availability.

Subsequently the name *Ursus maritimus* was adopted in Schreber (pl. 141, 1776 and p. 513, 1777), Erxleben (1777, p. 160) and Gmelin (1788, p. 101). Nineteenth century authors cited the name *maritimus* from a variety of sources, including those just mentioned, but rarely from Linnaeus (1758). Palmer (1904) was probably the first

to cite the name from Phipps (1774) and this has been followed by nearly all subsequent authors.

It is clear that attribution of the name *maritimus* to Linnaeus (1758) in Opinion 384 was an error. Authors both before (see, for example, Ellerman & Morrison–Scott, 1951) and after (for example, Corbet, 1978 and Wilson & Reeder, 1993) the 1956 ruling have cited Phipps (1774) as the author and date of the name; this practice should be continued and the entry on the Official List should be corrected.

The name *Ursus marinus*, independently proposed by Pallas (1776, p. 691), is a junior synonym of *Ursus maritimus* Phipps, 1774.

## References

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## Availability of zoological names published in theses

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The Commission Secretariat is frequently asked about the availability of names (and nomenclatural acts, such as the designation of type species) from their publication in theses, and it may be helpful to state the position.

There has never been a provision in the Code to the effect that a name or act cannot be made available from its appearance in a thesis. It follows that if a thesis is ‘published’ in the sense of the Code (Articles 8 and 9) names and acts in it will be available if the other necessary conditions are met.